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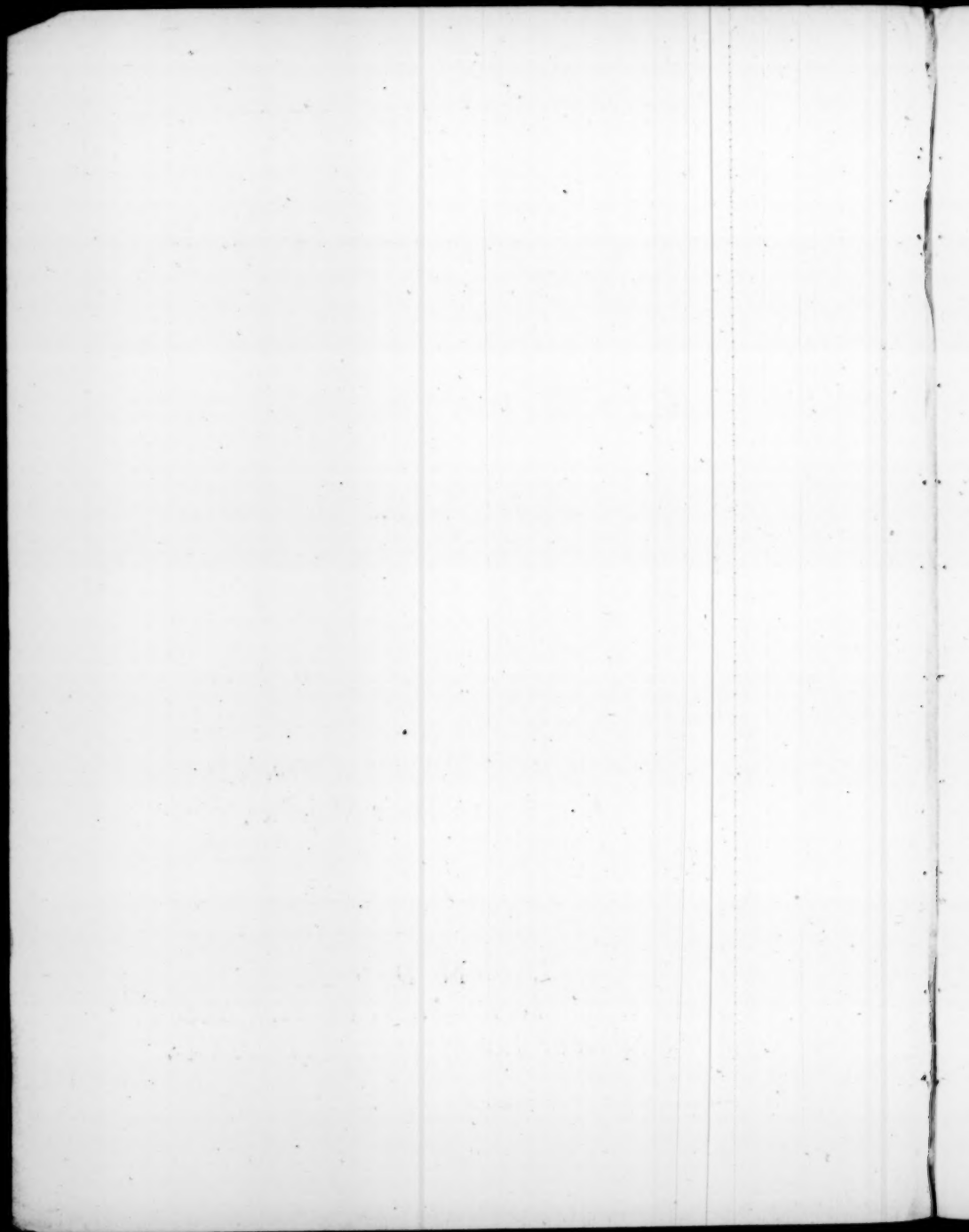
W H I T E - H A L L,

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Chaplain to Their Majesties.

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I. Epistle of S. John 3. 20.

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

ONE would be apt to think, that we of our Profession should not speak with so little effect as generally we do, considering the Matter and Substance of our Message. We exhort you to nothing, but that which you your selves (as oft as you are serious) judge meet and necessary: reprove you for nothing, but that for which even your own ingenuity doth so too, and cannot but confess you are
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to blame for. The things are all so equal and reasonable, that not only the Modest and Vertuous, but the very Loosest and Wildest sort of People are not without regrets and reluctancies in their violations of them.

What aileth thee O thou Sea, that thou flyest ! We see no affections or passions in any of the other Creatures but what have some foundation : it is not for nothing that the Hare runneth at the sight of the Dog, or the Lamb trembleth at the approach of the Wolf : so that if those horrors for evil actions, that are woven into our constitutions, should be in vain and without any ground ; it would have been an error and miscarriage in our very Creation : which, seeing we cannot in the least discover in any of the rest of the works of God, (but that *in wisdom he hath founded them all*) why should we suspect and mistrust it here ?

We may much rather conclude, that he who hath given instincts to Birds, Beasts, Fishes, proper and useful for the preservation of themselves from mischief, hath placed Conscience in the immortal part of man for
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the same end : namely, to forewarn him of the things that tend to his eternal ruine.

Let no one then despise these involuntary throbbings and recoilings of his heart upon the irregularities of his conversation ; they are not the products of a childish or artificial superstition, but the prognosticks of a real danger. How else should come such consternations in our minds, at things so agreeable to our inclinations ? If our Spirits upon such occasions speak not *good things concerning us but evil*, it is but what they have *first received from the Lord* ; if they accuse and cast us, whatsoever they *bind on earth is bound in heaven* : They are but the Eccho's of that sentence, which the Judge of all the world (whose Deputies they are) at that time doth pass on us : and therefore if these have ought against us, we may be assured he hath much more. This is the Doctrine our Apostle delivereth in the Text, *if our heart condemn us God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things*.

In which words, here are two practical truths to be took notice of,

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The *One* is *supposed* and this is, that we cannot but disapprove of our selves, when we take to, and go on in, any sinful courses *our own hearts forbear not to condemn us for them.*

The *Other* is *asserted*, and this is, that if our hearts do condemn us, so long as we abide in that state, we can expect nothing but to be condemned of God also. *He is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.*

That which I would first propound to your consideration is what is here *supposed*. That we cannot but disapprove of our selves, when we take to, and go on in, any sinful courses. *Our own hearts forbear not to condemn us for them.* I need not tell you that the word *heart* in Scripture is not ordinarily to be understood *literally* of that part of our body called so, but *metaphorically* of the powers of the *Soul*. In this sence, it is sometimes put for the *understanding*, so Rom. 1. 21. *their foolish heart was darkned.* Sometimes for the *will*, so Mat. 22. 37. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.* Sometimes for the *memory*, so Psalm 119. 11. *Thy word I have hid in my heart.* Sometimes for the *Conscience*,

science, so Eccles. 7. 22. *Thine own heart knoweth also that thou thy self hast cursed others.* And in this last acceptance you are to take it here that *our heart condemneth us*, that is in the Hebrew way of speaking, which St. *John* useth, and hath no precise, peculiar word for it, *our Consciences*. Not that you are to conceive of this as a distinct being of it self, subsisting separate from any of these faculties I have mentioned (that were as fantastick as to imagine death to be a person) but the operation and result of these in conjunction, about our moral actions. So it is, that when they are evil and unjustifiable, we cannot reflect on them without inquietude and dissatisfaction.

Among mankind some are *Fools*, and some are *Lunaticks* ; by the same means and in the same measure, that a man may be without *Reason*, he may be without *Conscience* too : but when ever this is whole and sound, the other abideth so also. It is as natural to us as that is, being indeed, but the maxims and the use of it.

The whole element of Fire may as soon be quenched by the spitting of a Child ; or

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the Wind blow out the light of the Sun that ruleth the day ; as any violence or sophistry, as long as we are our selves be able to extinguish it.

I grant it doth not constantly make the same noise in us. Sometimes it is as the alarm of a *Clock*, that goeth aloud, and waketh us with its warnings : at other times, as the hand of the *Dial*, that pointeth silently to the figure without striking : but either as one or t'other, here it is immovably fixed in every one of us, to record and judge our actions. The *high* as well as the *low*, the *gay* as well as the *melancholy*, the *bold* as well as the *timorous*, have its company. No *greatness* can *daunt* it, no *pleasures* can *charm* it, no *advantages* can *bribe* it, from performing its office.

This the daily experience of all ranks and degrees of people doth so manifestly prove, that I should not choose any longer to insist on it, were it not for the clearing of these two things.

1. How our hearts can be said to condemn us when we do evil, when as such, as walk contrary one to another in things of mighty moment

moment pertaining to God and to their duty, neither, have any regret for what they do, but both sides inward peace and quiet ?

Secondly, How our hearts can be said to condemn us, when we do evil, when several that live in scandalous *vices and immoralities* are yet so far from any trouble of mind about it, they rather make a mock of it ?

The first objection to be answered is, how our hearts can be said to condemn us when we do evil, when as such as walk contrary one to another, in things of mighty moment pertaining to God, and to their duty, neither have any regret for what they do, but both sides inward peace and quiet ? This is notorious in matter of fact. What with some is Religion, with others is an abomination ; what with some is Devotion, with others is Superstition ; what with some is Duty, with others is absolutely unlawful ; and yet each equally well perswaded, each equally well satisfied in their ways and actings. One of these be sure must be in the wrong, and yet their hearts as much assure and comfort them, as theirs that are not.

So that in some cases, it seemeth, a man may do evll, and yet his *heart not condemn Him* neither.

It is true, in such where it self is deceived and mistaken it doth not. How is it possible it should? Our hearts are not infallible: by art and education, by company and custom, they may be miserably abused and imposed upon. In Christendom, whole Kingdoms and Nations; in Kingdoms numerous Sects and Parties (let who will be in the right) are sad examples of it.

What shall we say then? Doth the heart neglect to do its part in such? No, even where it is thus, it doth its duty to the utmost of its ability. For tho it may err in judging of the evil, it faileth not to condemn us for what it apprehendeth to be evil, and flyeth in our faces, if we attempt it. In difficult and disputable cases, an upright heart may be out, as to which is the right and which wrong; but if the man, for any by ends, shall forsake that which it telleth him is the right, and espouse the wrong, it certainly reproacheth and tormenteth him for it.

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Let none say, if this be all, seeing it may be out, as well as in, what need we so much regard it? For, if in this case we have honestly done what we can to inform it, then without scruple we may securely follow it.

For the reason but now suggested, we are not hastily and implicitly to follow its verdict; so we may be accessory to our own delusion: but if we impartially and diligently weigh the ground of our persuasion; we do all that is in the power of discreet and good men. Then if our hearts should misguide us, we need not question, but that *he who knoweth whereof we are made* will mercifully forgive us. So that if after that, our hearts condemn us not, we *may have confidence towards God*. And let this suffice for the first Objection.

Object. 2. The other is, how our hearts can be said to condemn us when we do evil; when as many who live in scandalous vices and immoralities, are so far from any disturbance of mind, they rather make a mock of it? We read of some whose *Consciences were seared with a hot iron*: of others, who *being*

2 Tim. 4. 22

Eph. 4. 19. being *past feeling*, had given themselves over to *lasciviousness*: and if we did not, we live in an age can show us such, who go on in wayes of gross and palpable wickedness, with an uninterrupted sanguine security, and are not in trouble as other men.

It is not to be denyed, but that too oft it is so; but the question is how such persons come to be so? Were they so alwayes? No, it was time and long habit brought them to this, they did not presently arrive to it. *Solomon* describing the common Harlot, telleth us *She eateth and wipeth her mouth and saith I have done no wickedness*: Having used her self to that course of life, she was so lost to all sense of virtue and honour as to make nothing of it. But in what a different manner doth innocent *Thamer* resent but an immodest sollicitation? *And I whether shall I cause my shame to go!*

It is nothing but custom and oft repetition, that lessen our apprehensions and abate our horrors for ill actions. Great sins of any kind, like the Indian smoke, tho by degrees people may so inure themselves to it they cannot forbear it, make every one sick at
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the first time of their taking it. O what struglings and averfions are there before ! what commotions and inquieties afterwards ! They who have got over these, and conquered them, cannot but acknowledge themselves have sometimes felt them. Yes, and before they go out of the world in all probability will again. Conscience, tho, like *Abigail*, it saith nothing less or more while the *wine is in the man*, while intoxicated with the strength and fulness of temptations; when it findeth him come to himself and sober, in retirement, in affliction, in danger, in sickness, then it will take the opportunity to tell him his own, and make him hear of it. It is a worm that never dieth; tho it be trod upon, at one time or other it will turn again, and gnaw the man that serveth it so. Our hearts are *physically* good, tho not *morally*: tho they delight in the sin, they cannot avoid being disturbed at it; tho they contribute to it, yet so it is (witness all our experience) they condemn us for it.

This is the first thing we are here informed of, that we cannot but disapprove of our selves when we take to, and go on
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in any sinful course. Taking that therefore now for granted, let us proceed to consider the consequences of it. However at present it may be hector'd and outbrav'd, despis'd and made light of; it concerneth us seriously to mind it. The thing doth not end here, there is another-guess-one than our hearts, that observeth and is displeas'd also, *God himself*, who confirmeth the Sentence and *condemneth* us too.

This is the truth that is here asserted in the other part of the Text which I am now to speak to, that they whose hearts do thus condemn them, in that state can expect nothing but to be condemn'd of God also, *He is greater than our hearts and Knoweth all things.*

It is not said by the Apostle *Syllabically* if our heart condemn us, God will condemn us too: but it is at least *Equivalently*; by an expression, in which instead of such affirmation, is elegantly couched the reason of it. *God is greater than our hearts and Knoweth all things.*

A judicious interpreter looketh upon the former words as a Rhetorical *apostrophe*. *If our heart condemn us !* a broken
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exclamation of astonishment at the dangerousness of such a condition, to be supplied with some such thoughts as these, *what is then like to become of us when God shall enter into judgment with us ! If we cannot answer our doings to our selves, how shall we be able to answer them before him ! If our own Spirits frown on us and upbraid us, how shall we be able to look on him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity !*

And tho neither the vulgar nor we have translated it, because in several Greek manuscripts there is none of it, yet the common Copies before these later words put *on* for : *For God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.* And so they contain three arguments for a serious regard to the rebukes and convictions of our own Consciences, to make us sensible that if these be offended with us, God is so much more.

The first is taken from his *Being*, He is God.

The second from his *Power*, *He is greater than our hearts.*

The third from his *Omniscience*, *He knoweth all things.*

The first Argument here hinted for it, is taken from his *Being*, He is *God*. *God* whose *Deputies* our hearts are, and whose mind they speak. These would not disturb or threaten us in the pursuit of any of our natural appetites did not he commission them. So that I may say of their verdict, what the Evangelist doth of *Caiaphas's*, *this speak they not of themselves but prophesie*. It is not their own doings, but *the word is in our hearts as a burning fire shut up in our bones, and they are weary of forbearing*. Now who hath power enough to do this? to make our selves fall foul upon our selves, but God only?

I grant in some particular cases, other things may do it: an error, a disease may sometimes be sufficient, and put the heart upon *condemning* when God doth *not*. We see it in some weak and melancholy persons, who in the bitterness of their souls, cry out that they are *castaways*, *past the day of Grace*, &c. whom (if they deal sincerely in the grounds of their complaint, and
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say all) we may well *hope better things* of. But this is *rare and accidental*, where it is *universal* there must be more than so in it. And so it is with men about things materially *moral*, it is not the case of here and there *one*, but of every one to be so affected. *Parthians and Medes and Elamites, the dwellers in Mesopotamia and Judæa and Cappadocia, &c. Jews and Gentiles, Christians and Heathens, Ancient and Modern, Civil and Barbarous,* have all the same sentiments. Here the whole world is of one language, and do as much agree about what is *virtuous* and *vicious*, what is *good* and *evil*, as what is *clean* and *foul*, what is *sweet* and *bitter*. They show the work of the *Law written in their hearts, their Consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts either accusing or else excusing them.*

Now who can write there in such manner upon all, but only he who hath created all? This is that which the Jewish Doctors mean by their *separate intelligence*, the ancient Schoolmen by their *Intellectus agens*, *Adam de Morisco* by *Elia's Raven*, when they

speak of the *manifestation of the Law of Nature*: they are but so many affected obscure expressions to signifie that it is from the *God of Heaven*. And if it be he, we may be sure he doth not *use lightness*, his *word shall not be yea and nay*; he will not say one thing to men in this world, and the contrary in that which is to come; but what he *condemneth* by our *hearts* here, he will *condemn* by *himself* there. So that if these condemn us, as long as we go on in these things, and do not reform, we have no reason to imagine that God will not deal with us in the same manner. That is the first argument intimated for the proof of it, taken from his *Being*, He is *God*. *God* who now setteth the heart on work, and teacheth it to do so.

The second Argument he useth for it, is taken from his *Power*, *He is greater than our hearts*. If we could struggle so, as to bear, or break through the sharpest stings of these, yet his indignation will be heavier and more intollerable.

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How light soever they may make of it, whose own are yet asleep, to be under but the positive *condemnation* of *Conscience*, is of it self a deplorable and very fearful circumstance. How comfortless and unhappy do we see this thing alone can make men, when it seizeth their *awakened* Souls, and throughly possesseth their imagination ! How doth a dart strike through their liver, and a fire burn in their bowels ! How doth it drink up all their moisture, and make their faces gather paleness ! How doth it break their restless bones, and sometimes quite overturn their Understandings ! Racks are more tolerable, Death it self hath been often flown to, by them that were under it, as the more eligible.

I mention not these outrageous violences of Spirit, as things either *necessary* or *commendable* (as some would make them) in the *conversion* of a *Sinner*. No they proceed not from any such causes as should deserve it. *Ignorance*, or *Despair*, *Ignorance* of the nature of the Gospel Covenant, or *Despair* of what it promisseth to the Sinner when he repenteth, being

being the usual wombs that bear them and Paps that *give* them suck. All that I hint it for, is only to show you what a *Hell* it is to be but under the *Condemnation* of our own *hearts*.

But let no man fancy (as some perversely have been broaching) that this is the *only Hell*. As terrible as this is, there is the same difference between it, and that which shall come after; as between the *sentence* pronounced against the *Malefactor*, which sometimes doth not so much as *change his Countenance*, and the *execution* that *taketh away his life*. When *Conscience* tormenteth men so, it is not by any proper *efficiency* of its own, by the exercise of any *natural power*: For it is but an *opinion* or *judgment* of our state as to eternity, that it is *dangerous and damnable*: When it hath represented this, it hath not more that it can do, But *God is greater*. What that only threatneth, he fulfilleth: What that only maketh us fear, he will make us feel. Now he being provoked by these very things our *hearts* are, we have great reason to be concerned if *they condemn us*, tho at present we suffer

suffer not any alteration by it : For if we go hence in that state, *God will condemn us too :* and then we shall not come off so, *He is greater than our hearts.* And that is the second Argument.

The last by which he goeth about to prove the importance of our *hearts condemning us*, is taken from Gods *omniscience*, *He Knoweth all things.* Our hearts know more ill of us, than all the world besides, but he much more than they. *None knoweth the things of a man save the Spirit of man that is in him*, none knoweth so much of them as that doth, but yet there are abundance of things, that even that for want of minding or memory, knoweth but imperfectly and confusedly.

But there is not a word in our tongue but he knoweth it altogether, nor a *thought in our heart*, that he *understandeth not a far of.* He *discovereth* much sin by us we do not *observe* : he *remembreth* much sin by us we have *forgotten* : and so knoweth more cause for our *condemnation* than our hearts can possibly represent to us. And therefore if they know enough by us to condemn

demn us, we cannot but conclude *God* doth much more.

Our *hearts* in their evidence against us, in matter of-fact we may be sure speak nothing but the truth, but they are not able to speak the whole truth. *Who can understand his errors?* and therefore if they out of their broken notes draw up such an enditement against us, as is sufficient eternally to undo and destroy us; how shall we be able to stand before him, to whom *all things are naked and bare?*

Our hearts may *acquit* us, and yet it is not impossible but *God* may *condemn* us. 1. Cor. 4.4. So St. *Paul* thought *I know nothing by my self* (saith he) my own heart doth not accuse me, yet *am I not hereby justified*, I may be mistaken *he that judgeth me* (that is ultimately and unerringly) *is the Lord*. And if when our own hearts *acquit* us, it is not impossible but *God* may *condemn* us, surely if our hearts *condemn* us we have no pretence for the presumption that *God* will *acquit* us.

When a man is condemned by a *Judge*, who was his *friend* or *near relation* every one will

will conclude the thing was plain, and he deserved it certainly. Here the *Judge* is not only our *friend* but our very *selves*. We are very apt to think well of our *selves*, that we are *sincere, Penitents, Believers*; when it may be there is no reason for it: but if ever we think ill of our selves, that we are *hypocritical, prophane, atheistical*, we may conclude there is a great deal of reason for that; more always than appeareth to *us*, and all this is open to the eye of *God*: Upon this account the Apostle here reckoneth there is so much danger of him, whose *heart condemneth him*, because that *God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things*.

This is the sense of the words I have read to you; which being delivered by way of *supposition*, with an (*If*) a thing that may be, or may not be. I am unwilling to dismiss you, while I have pressed you to consider of it, every one as to his own particular.

It cannot reasonably be imagined, that we should all of us be in one and the same state: there must needs be of both sorts among us. And as I doubt not but there

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may be several, whose hearts testify for them and condemn them not : so, it must be a very extraordinary Assembly, where there is not cause enough to fear, that there are many, whose hearts cannot but rise up against them, and do. None can say any thing to this but your selves, and what can be more becoming you, at this time especially, when some of you this morning already have, others are going to, *eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup*, than carefully and strictly examine your selves about it.

Lorip's hath a fancy, that when our Saviour stooped down and wrote on the ground, (while the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were asking him the question, What should be done to the Woman taken in adultery) that he did it so miraculously, that each of her accusers, when they looked upon it, read all their own particular sins there; and that this was that which made them sink away so, one by one abasht and out of countenance. What he imagineth they did by Miracle, every one of us (if we will) may do without one. If we would
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look but where we ought, every one into our own bosomes, there we may see, if not each distinct fact that we have done, yet however the great and common habits in which we live. O search and see then, *commune with your own hearts and be still*, awfully mind the report these make to you.

It is said of *Herod*, Luke 3. 20. that *to all the evil that he had done, he added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.* John was he that reproved him for his vices, he that admonished him of his sin, he that called him to repentance : and to shut him up in prison, is called an *adding to his evil above all*. What ever your actions have been any of you, whatsoever the course of your lives, to shut your eyes against *this burning and shining light* ; to stop your ears at this *voice crying within you* ; to *detain the truth* which this telleth you, in *unrighteousness*, is to be guilty of a sin much like to that. If we will not hear thee, O thou vice-gerent of God within us : If we will not hear thee, O thou Guardian Angel of

our better part, when thou tellest us our faults, between thee and us alone, we shall be worse to thee than even Heathens and Publicans.

But of all that neglect or refuse to take notice of it, I must by no means omit to remember you, that there are none who do it with so much danger to themselves as you whom the providence of God hath placed in higher stations, and raised above the common rank of men. This is all the Monitor that many such as you, if you fall into temptations, can rely upon. Your quality and condition of life maketh it more than ordinary difficult, for them whose Office it is to *watch over your souls* to admonish you; and there are several cases wherein your *servants for Jesus sake* can scarce, without exceeding their Commission, be particular. So that if you gag this faithful Officer within, and will not suffer him to speak, you will be in greater hazard of miscarrying than those in a meaner *station*. But him you have always with you, which will in any wise rebuke you, and not suffer

suffer sin upon you, but as there is occasion say such things to you, as no other either may, or can.

To end then, *Hear this all ye people, give ear all the Inhabitants of the Earth, both high and low, rich and poor together.* When ever you find this checking, advising, warning you, by all the *terrors of the Lord* I would *perswade*, by all the kindness you have for your selves I would beseech you to give an ear to it. When it *smiteth* you count it for a *kindness*, when it reproveth you, be thankful as for a blessing. Instead of accosting it as *Ahab* did *Elijah*, *Hast thou found me, O mine Enemy*, salute it as *David* did *Abigail*, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel that sent thee this day to meet me.* It really deserveth it at your hands, It's design is not to torment you before the time, but to save you from the wrath to come: receive it then accordingly; not as a *Spy* or a busie *Inform*er, but as an *Apostle*, as an *Angel of God*. So treating it, you will have praise of the same at last, and joyce in its testi-

testimony. By this way you may so improve their *judging you*, as to prevent your *being judged by the Lord*, and make their *condemning* you now a means of God's *acquitting* you in the Great Day.

F I N I S.

